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PART SLAVE, PART FREE
—C. K. Yearley, Jr.

THE

# Commonweal

***Biggest Economic Headache***

## AMERICA'S FARM PROBLEM

**by Edward T. Chase**

## New York, N. Y.

**by William James Smith**

BETWEEN TWO WARS . . . . . by James Greene
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THE
# Commonweal
A Weekly Review of Public Affairs, Literature, and the Arts
THIRTY-FOURTH YEAR OF PUBLICATION

## week by week

### PROTESTANT-CATHOLIC TENSIONS

ONE PRIEST we know insists that talk of Protestant-Catholic tensions in the United States is nonsense. Such tensions, he says, exist largely in the minds of Protestant and Catholic editors. In his view, editors debate with each other in print, then describe the exchange as a manifestation of Protestant-Catholic tensions. Look around the country, he says; you will find Catholics and Protestants living side by side in peace, no matter what editors on both sides may claim.

There is, happily, a certain amount of truth to this thesis. Protestants and Catholics in the United States do live side by side in most parts of the country, without any outbreaks of civil war. America has never really known the kind of religious bitterness which in some European countries has kept citizens in warring camps for centuries. But, with this much granted, we think our priest friend overstates his case.

Take the issues over which Protestant and Catholic editors debate. What are they? Right now the potential candidacy of Senator Kennedy for the Presidency threatens to be one. Proposals to legalize bingo or other forms of gambling will usually precipitate bitter dispute. Efforts to repeal the birth control laws in Connecticut or Massachusetts bring long-suppressed conflicts to the surface. In most communities attempts to win school bus transportation or similar benefits for parochial school children will quickly reveal deep divisions in the community.

Editors do not invent such issues. They simply talk about them when they come up. Nor is it really correct to say that such issues cause Protestant-Catholic tensions. When they do arise in the natural order of events, however, the ensuing debates usually reveal the suspicion and hostility that have been there all the time.

The thesis that Protestant-Catholic tensions exist only in the minds of editors, then, is an attractive one, but we cannot accept it. Tensions do exist, and they are real. And in certain areas and on certain questions, they are likely to get worse before they get better. Yet a definite note of hope was sounded recently by Father Gustave Weigel, S.J. Speaking to the 48th annual convention of the Catholic Press Association, held in Richmond, the noted Jesuit theologian said that a great change had taken place, that "the Catholic is now interested in the Protestant as a Protestant and the Protestant is even more interested in the Catholic as a Catholic." If Father Weigel reads the signs correctly, we may be entering a new era of improved relations between Protestants and Catholics in the United States.

WE HOPE Father Weigel is right, and we think he is. Is there a contradiction, though, between the increase in Protestant-Catholic tensions on some questions and Father Wiegel's optimism? If we understood their reactions correctly, some of the Catholic editors in Richmond thought there was. Fresh from local conflicts over such immediate issues as school buses or released-time programs, they found it hard to reconcile Father Weigel's description with the reality they know. But we do not think there is any real conflict between what Father Weigel said and what these Catholic editors sometimes encounter in the course of their work.

This is a big country. In some sections of it, Protesant theology is still treated as if it were the law of the land. Protestantism is identified with Americanism, and vice versa. The school system is for all practical purposes Protestant. Even the parochialism of the P.O.A.U. is hailed as if it were



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beyond challenge. To those Catholic editors who have to cope with such situations week after week, talk about a new era in Protestant-Catholic relations is hard to understand. And on their side of the fence Protestant editors could probably cite comparable examples which would seem to give the lie to any talk of improved Protestant-Catholic relations.

On another level, though—the high one on which Father Weigel operates—relations between Protestants and Catholics have definitely improved. As the Woodstock Jesuit noted, the ecumenical movement inside Protestantism has led to greater unity among Protestants and to the merger of many Protestant denominations. This fact has led many Protestants to look more sympathetically toward the Catholic Church; fragmentation is not considered a value in itself. In addition, more and more Protestants are becoming interested in the idea of liturgy, and interest in public acts of worship has led to more sympathetic study and deeper understanding of Catholic life.

For their part, Catholics have in recent years become less fearful. Their social and economic position is far more assured than it was a generation ago. With more than thirty-five million Catholics in the country, Catholics feel less and less like a persecuted minority. And as this general feeling of security has grown, American Catholics have become less and less suspicious, more and more ready to talk things over with their Protestant neighbors.

All this is cause for rejoicing. Can men of good will do anything to speed the process up? Many specific suggestions could be made, but here we will attempt only one general observation.

Protestants need to understand that there is much more freedom and diversity inside the Catholic Church than most of them realize. Catholics recognize the Pope as the Vicar of Christ on earth and the Bishops as successors of the Apostles. But the fact that Catholics believe the Church can speak with authority should not lead Protestants to imagine that every Communion breakfast speaker has been commissioned to speak with that authority, nor that the tactics of the local post of the Catholic War Veterans represent a considered "policy" of the American Bishops.

On the other side of the question, oddly enough, Catholics need to learn the same lesson about Protestantism. Take Protestant publications, for example. If there are some Catholic papers which seem to delight in offending Protestant convictions and feelings, Protestants too have their own penny-dreadful press whose chief stock-in-trade is anti-Catholicism. But the editors of such publications do not speak for all Protestants, any more than do spokesmen for that organization known as "Protestants and Other Americans United for Separation of Church and State." Catholics should remember this.

Protestants and Catholics alike, in short, need to know more about each other and to view the disputes that rise in some reasonable kind of perspective. On each side there are those who seem anxious to inflame public opinion and to divide the American people. But we are convinced that such belligerents are not representative of the vast bulk of their co-religionists, and this fact should be recognized by everyone.

Differences between Catholics and Protestants over matters of public policy are inevitable. How could it be otherwise? But difference and debate do not have to mean a general alarum and a call to arms. In recent years great progress has been made. If the men of moderation on both sides will only make their voices heard, the new and better era of Protestant-Catholic relations foretold by Father Weigel can truly be achieved.

## DE GAULLE'S FIRST MONTH

THE AUTHORITARIAN bogeyman conjured up by General de Gaulle's many enemies in politics is proving so far to be largely a fiction. More is known now of the actions by which de Gaulle prevented a thoroughly plotted military coup. Furthermore, his insistence on constitutional procedures and his firmness with the French Parliament, the army officers in Algeria and the various "Committees of Public Safety" have won the General wide respect. The fact that what open opposition he now has comes from the extremists of the Right and Left serves as a good omen. It may even be predicted that General de Gaulle will continue to control the French Army, raise national morale and make some headway in setting French finances on a sounder base.

Were it not for Algeria he might well succeed in carrying the day. The fatal weakness in his program is that ultimately it involves going on with a murderous war which there is little hope of winning. Several years ago, before so much blood and torture and bitterness, the natives of Algeria would have welcomed free and equal elections in their constituent part of France. It is not de Gaulle's fault that today they will accept nothing short of



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independence. But that is what places in jeopardy —and tends to defeat, in the end—the heroic measures de Gaulle is taking to save France.

## SCIENTISTS' PARLEY ON TESTS

PROGRESS TOWARD a first step in the control of nuclear weapons continues to be impeded by differences in approach. The Soviet Union has announced that it has suspended all further testing of nuclear weapons and has called upon Britain and the United States to follow suit. It is willing to send technicians to Geneva to discuss things with their American counterparts, but the Russians are not primarily enthusiastic about such a meeting; they maintain that since nuclear tests can no longer be made without being detected abroad, there is no great need for the preliminary discussion, without commitment, called for by the United States.

In fact, the latest Soviet note on the subject presents an entirely different version of the projected conference. Instead of preliminary exchange of views between scientists as to the feasibility of detecting nuclear explosions and the extent of the policing that would be necessary to make a ban effective (the American objectives), the Soviet Union refers to this parley as a means of negotiating an agreement to end nuclear testing all around. Once again the Soviet Union presents itself to the world as eager to conclude a treaty to control and reduce armaments, placing the onus for keeping the parley within previously agreed limits on the much-maligned United States.

The Soviet Union has also modified the original plan as to the participants. What was to have been a discussion between Russian and American scientists, with a few other scientists from other countries attending as individuals, has now been broadened to include representatives from Poland and Czechoslovakia and from France and Britain. Here is a six-power parley from which a binding agreement is expected, according to the Russian view.

Such divergences before the scientists' meeting even starts do not augur well. And the thorniest difficulty of all remains to be brought forward. Unless the vast land mass of Communist China is subject to policing, the NATO powers could have no assurance that Soviet testing had not been shifted to the East. Without the consent of Communist China, most observers believe that effective control is hardly possible.

On the other hand, some beginning must be made. The men who have completed their two-year study on radiation for the U.N. are said to be split on an outright recommendation to suspend tests, but they are unanimously in agreement in calling for greater caution. The amount of radioactive fallout not harmful to human beings and their descendants is a matter of dispute. But there is a tendency among scientists, as more and more facts become known, continually to reduce that figure. That is one reason the scientists' meetings scheduled to open in Geneva on July 1 could be of such key importance.

## THE CASE OF SHERMAN ADAMS

THE ISSUES swirling around Presidential Assistant Sherman Adams lend weight to the cliché about troubles coming not as single spies but in battalions. The Eisenhower Administration, and the President himself, have been subjected to increasing criticism within the last year, and recent elections and polls have indicated a gradual diminution of popularity. The charges brought against Sherman Adams, however they are phrased, will undoubtedly damage the moral prestige of the Eisenhower family. Democrats, particularly those who bore the brunt of similar charges in the Presidential campaign of 1952, will of course make the most of the accusations. And there can be no doubt that even within the official family the charges are felt to be damaging. Several Republicans who will be up for reelection this fall have already urged that Adams give the "full story" before the Democrats dig it up a bit at a time and exploit it for partisan purposes.

What exactly has Sherman Adams done that his usefulness to the Administration is now being questioned? He accepted substantial gifts from "a close friend," Mr. Bernard Goldfine, who has been recently involved in proceedings before the Federal Trade Commission and the Securities and Exchange Commission. These are regulatory agencies whose concerns the President has left largely up to Mr. Adams, so the possibility of bringing his influence to bear was clearly possible. Both Mr. Adams and Mr. Goldfine deny that such influence was either sought or obtained. Mr. Adams acknowledged that he had performed the friendly function of communicating with the agencies on cases that affected Mr. Goldfine and that he had once arranged for him an appointment with the F.T.C. chairman. But he asserted that he took no position



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on the case to be decided, nor did Mr. Goldfine receive special attention.

It is to the credit of Mr. Adams and his past record that almost no one in Washington considers him guilty of moral wrongdoing, and that, as James Reston of the N.Y. *Times* said, "even after studying the record most people here still think he is 'above suspicion.'" Those who wish to damage Mr. Adams' position by proving moral corruption on his part will, according to these reports, have a difficult time. Such a conclusion, however, will not stop the clamor concerning his action.

Lord Acton's frequently quoted dictum, that "power tends to corrupt," is almost always applied to moral corruption—but it need not be. It can as well be applied to the judgment. Although the exact extent of Mr. Adams' power is not clearly defined, no one would deny that it is substantial. And a person in his position, it is argued, should never accept a gift that might bring his private conscience into conflict with public interest, or which might appear to do so. And Mr. Adams has acted so that at least the appearance of such a conflict is present. What is most seriously called into question, therefore, is not his moral rectitude but his judgment.

The history of recent political campaigns, the attacks on "influence peddling" and the President's clarion calls for "a great crusade," plus the public image Sherman Adams has for so long successfully projected, will ensure continued debate. Adlai Stevenson, who suffered from the charges brought against the Truman Administration, spoke for many Democrats when he caustically remarked that we have all heard "a lot of pious teaching from Mr. Adams about integrity, high ethics and the evils of undue influence." And prominent Republicans agree with Senator Knowland, who, in criticizing Mr. Adams for his continued silence, said "the facts should be completely disclosed, otherwise the responsibility he has with the President would be seriously undermined." But even Mr. Adams' testimony before Congressional investigators will not completely refurbish the smudged image.

The present Administration and Mr. Adams have already suffered from this latest example of the conflict between personal friendship and public interest. It is unlikely that the "disclosure" will elevate the level of the coming elections. The entire incident adds to the moral confusion of our time, and it is this that is most to be regretted. The general electorate cannot forever continue to see its most responsible officials, who have, moreover, taken upon themselves the roles of moral spokesmen, being called to account for questionable activities. It is, at best, difficult to formulate rules of conduct for every act of official life. But the insistent recurrence of cases such as this reminds us that public acts must be regulated by some recognizable ethical code.

## STIMULATING TRADE

THE HEADLINES announcing House approval of a full five-year extension of the Reciprocal Trade Agreements Act by a better than three-to-one vote have had their good effects. The unexpected margin of this vote is due to several causes. One is the insistence of President Eisenhower. Another is the preparatory series of detailed surveys made by the Department of Commerce to demonstrate the direct dependence of certain of our local industries on the maintenance and expansion of America's foreign trade.

Representatives of industries that welcome the prospect of five more years with peril-point provisions and escape-clauses also lent a hand. Some friends of international trade are of the opinion that too many and too extensive concessions to American business were made to insure passage through the House. For instance, by a two-thirds vote of both Houses, Congress would be empowered to overrule the President when he vetoes recommendations of higher duties made by the Tariff Commission. The act passed by the House, and about to be considered by the Senate, is the first one in the twenty-four years of the Reciprocal Trade era to include procedures whereby tariffs actually may be raised substantially.

The American industries which welcome a five-year extension of provisions they consider favorable to their operations should have little difficulty in understanding that uncertainties about our trade policies make for real obstacles in other lands to both export and import trade with the United States. Where raw materials and semi-processed commodities are concerned, wide fluctuations in prices and American demand often prove calamitous to the producing countries. The thoughtful and persuasive Rockefeller report, "Foreign Economic Policy for the Twentieth Century," points out that "what is a small item on our import list may be a major source of revenue for an exporting nation." Assuredly one of the chief means of building up the strength of the free world is a consistent American low-tariff policy that continually takes foreign conditions and needs into account.



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# America's Farm Problem

*Our politicians and our farm specialists have not been short of answers. Yet until recently few if any of the answers have been good ones.*

by EDWARD T. CHASE

THE THREAT of social and economic dislocation from automation is a very modish topic among feature writers and social scientists, especially the prospect of the automatic factory. Curiously, however, the notion is seldom applied to our largest single industry, farming, which has the most workers, the largest capital investment, the largest gross value for its output and for nearly a century, ever since the post-Civil War period, has been our biggest single economic headache. Yet dislocation from technological progress is the heart of the farm problem.

The farm problem is really a maze of problems, not the least of which is gross confusion about its nature, and the Congressional farm bloc bears a notorious responsibility for this. Its overriding concern has always been short-range relief of symptoms and escape from the displeasure of constituents by means of whipping boys, such as middlemen, the corporate farm and now Ezra Taft Benson.

Let there be no mistake about it, the problem is a grave one, despite the current evidence of a temporary upturn in farm income (an eight per cent rise in farm prices and income for the first third of 1958 compared with the same period in 1957, caused strictly by Midwest drought and Florida freeze). Statistics alone cannot illuminate what is a complex and poignant human situation, but a handful are quite pertinent. Nearly a third of all non-military Federal expenditures goes to supporting agriculture, the largest single "civil" item. Besides the tax burden this represents, there is also the matter of high food costs, which the technological revolution in farming might have cut in half long ago had it been directed to operate on behalf of the consumer. Meantime, the income-cost plight of millions of farmers has been harsh and their families have suffered from chronic poverty. They have seen their net income drop forty-one per cent from 1948 to 1957, down from $17 billion to $10 billion, while all their costs have risen. The per capita decline was only six per cent, from $958 to $902, because of the dwindling farm population, comparing dismally, nevertheless, with an overall U. S. per capita increase of thirty-three per cent in the same period, from $1,279 to $1,708. And let it be remarked that today's farmer, unfortunately, lives on practically the same cash basis as the rest of us, even buys his eggs in the grocery store. What is especially galling about all this is that we have spent about 45 billion dollars in the last quarter-century directly or indirectly aimed at resolving the problem. And we have managed for the most part only to compound it.

This has been a sad and inexcusable failure, when one considers how much man knows about both the historic tribulations of agriculture and the processes of technological displacement. The enclosure movement in English agriculture, for instance, is an instructive analogue for us as we face a mass exodus from the farm (1,800,000 left in 1957, a record migration) and a trend toward urbanism that is now irreversible. This English precedent lacks the cruel complication of our surplus problem, however. This is the further predicament the American has imposed on himself through his science: excess production accomplished through the frenzied race for ever higher yields, creating undistributable commodity surpluses in a world where starvation is endemic. The surpluses, costing us about one million dollars daily for storage, relentlessly depress the prices the farmer receives for his industry. This spurs him to create still larger surpluses, a treadmill-like exercise that must be stopped without at the same time destroying its victim, the farmer. This is the general setting of our farm problem.

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THE DISPLACED English farmer and agricultural laborer suffered severely from enclosure. So did the farmer doomed to a sub-human existence by too small or poor holdings. Nothing much was done about it. On the other hand, however, man responded with belated horror to the uncontrolled barbarisms perpetrated in the early phases of the industrial revolution. He fashioned great systems of legislation to ameliorate the machine's impact.

Certainly it is more than high time we quit deploring the maladjustments in American agriculture and applied similar wit and energy to *easing the effects* of this revolution. Consider the astonishing fact that the American farmer's man-hour output has actually risen more rapidly in the last twenty years than the rest of the economy, and this in a period of unmatched productive expansion. His production has *doubled* since 1940; he feeds twenty others besides himself, as against three others in the nineteenth century.

To adjust agricultural resources to this productive boom, Mr. Benson has made us fear his real aim is a cataclysmic reversal of farming from a controlled to a completely free status. His current plea for authority for a wider price-support range—between sixty and ninety per cent of parity (it is now seventy-five and ninety)—suggested this to many. But Mr. Benson himself has recognized that a sudden change is manifestly undesirable, as well as being a political impossibility. Sudden return to a free market would see the wholesale bankruptcy of much of American farming. Millions of farmers, a substantial percentage of whom undoubtedly lack proper land and other resources to justify their staying in farming, would be thrown upon the untender mercies of urban industry—this during a time of considerable unemployment.

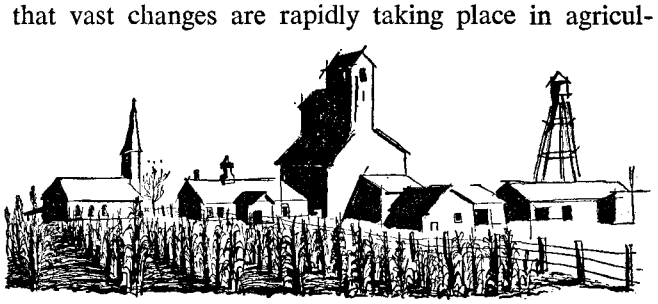
The classic palliatives of recent times are rigid high price-supports of certain major crops tied in with acreage allotments; government storage; and escalator laws that automatically force guaranteed price levels upward as surpluses decline—thereby encouraging new surpluses of the same. What we have is a perpetuation into "peacetime" of the agricultural production incentives of World War II, an endlessly self-defeating system. It is a palpably absurd system from the viewpoint of economic logic or any other logic, as has been demonstrated clearly by responsible students of the problem. Not to mention the fact that the support system, while originally an incentive system, was later rationalized as a price "stabilizing" system, but has in fact been used strictly as an income subsidy for the farmer. Even more bewildering is the fact that while this subsidy results in a stimulus to the farmer, the government at the same time, with the other hand, pays him to stop production by placing his land in a "soil bank."

Yet this price-support system, in a bumbling and increasingly ineffectual way, has transcended logic, so to speak. It has acted as a giant philanthropy financed by all of us to sustain a certain minimal vitality in farm income until we could come up with a real solution to the problem. While the farm bloc has been selfishly short-sighted, the high price-support advocates are to be sympathized with. They have the humanity to appreciate that a brutal readjustment brought about by throwing agriculture on the free market would have a devastating repercussion on something over half our farm families. Nevertheless, this fact has tended to paralyze us, has disarmed us from asking for real solutions from the major political parties, and thus in the long run has served neither the farmer nor society in general.

OUR POLITICIANS and our farm specialists have not been short of answers. Yet until recently few if any of the answers have been good ones. Dismissing Secretary Benson, for example, just won't do. (The eight per cent farm income rise, plus the tacit acceptance of Congressional leaders that votes could not be mustered to override President Eisenhower's recent veto of the bill to freeze price supports at 1957 levels have silenced the Benson-must-go talk.) Surplus disposal abroad helps, but it does not make an appreciable enough contribution to reducing price-deflation excesses, so great are they, and, regrettably enough, it has proved disruptive to friendly trade relations with our allies and friends. Meantime, support programs, acreage allotments and quotas have failed, especially so far as providing any foreseeable *termination* of the farm problem is concerned.

But one who closely observes the scene can detect a vitally important change occurring in farm thinking—among the experts in Congress, in the government, among farm leaders, and among economists and farm journalists. It is in essence a realization that the only truly responsible approach to the farmer's problem today is to help him to adjust to the radically altered agricultural scene created by science, not to perpetuate his difficulties by demonstrably hopeless expedients and irrational disinclination to face up to the facts of a changing rural economy.

We see the National Farmers Union at their annual convention this spring, while properly holding to their ideal of the family farm's virtues, not only recognizing that vast changes are rapidly taking place in agricul-





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ture but also that industry must be established in rural areas to provide a better balanced economy for agricultural communities. At the same time we see the most important of all the farm organizations, the American Farm Bureau Federation, strongly supporting the presidential veto of the bill to freeze price supports as in the farmers' best interests. Here is powerful evidence the farmers themselves have gone ahead of the farm bloc in their thinking and at last have begun to see the perils of tight governmental controls and the rigid high price-support system.

Meanwhile, in the farm state agricultural colleges there is a new preoccupation with the farmer's adjustment problem in the light of perhaps deplorable but nonetheless unchangeable trends, toward greater farm production; specialization; ever larger but fewer farm units; harder-pressed small, inefficient farmers; more part-time farmers; and the implacable evolution to urbanism. (This year, for the first time, Iowa—and Italy—have passed from predominantly rural-farm to urban-industrial states.) We see the establishment at Iowa State College of a new institution called the Center for Agricultural Adjustment, concerned with the farmer's sociological and cultural problems in this era of great dislocation in rural living patterns. Implicit in its establishment is a remarkable change of attitude in the farm country, away from emphasis on ever-greater production to the realization that the farm problem encompasses such once-heretical considerations as training excess farm labor for better economic opportunities in urban industry.

Several developments affecting national farm policy have occurred in recent months that both express and in part account for these fundamental changes in attitude.

In informed circles in Washington there is now the admission, grudgingly given in some quarters to be sure, that Congress can be expected slowly to accede to the realities of the technological revolution and provide new legislation calling for lower price-supports and other recommendations of the Administration's farm program.

There is talk of the possibility that much of the Administration's farm program may yet go through, though this appears unlikely to this observer. The other day Secretary Benson said that if the agriculture committees would allow Congress an opportunity to pass upon this program, "it would have a good chance." After the evidence the members picked up at home during the spring recess of a grass-roots hostility to the old high support and tight controls approach, few would dispute this statement.

THE FACT is that the virulent power of the farm bloc is becoming a thing of the past as the diminution in farm constitutents accelerates. And not only is the drop of farm population to twelve per cent of our population (from nearly thirty per cent twenty-five years ago) decisive, but today the farmer shares most of the consumer interests of the rest of us. Add to this the divisive conflicts of interest within the old bloc, between South and West, and it becomes clear that it will not be able to perpetuate the short-range, rigid, high price-support remedies it has insisted upon in the past.

A remarkable experiment was carried out by the government recently to determine a direct way in which to bring about constructive (i.e., preservation of the land, not destruction) retirement of farm lands on a purely voluntary basis, with the hope of making a real dent in the surplus acreage problem. In four trial states farmers were invited to submit bids indicating what price rent they would accept per acre in return for taking their entire farms out of production for five- or ten-year periods. The number of farmers wishing to participate exceeded all expectations (over fifty thousand), though in fact none of the bids was accepted because the Agriculture Department eventually decided it could not furnish the funds to meet the average high bid level asked by the farmers. But it was a valuable experiment for the information it produced, and now the Department is weighing new methods and a higher rental level to make the device more practical.

What this farm retirement scheme represents is the most effective way to carry out the objectives of the Soil Bank, in particular the conservation reserve program, which is a vital part of the Administration's proposals and is now universally respected. This calls for payment to those who elect to withdraw their crop land from production and put it into a cover of trees or soil-conserving grass. It can be a boon to the terribly hard-pressed low-income farmer, hitherto immobilized by poverty, who is anxious for a chance at a more secure livelihood. At the same time it directly attacks the production problem.

One of the influences behind these plans and the shift in general attitude that has allowed them to come into being is the farm report of the Committee for Economic Development, the private research group of university and business leaders now embarked on a major exploration of America's monetary policies. The distinction of the C.E.D. report and what differentiates it from the series of prior "serious" proposals we have had (the McNary-Haugen plan, the Triple A's program, the Brannan plan, marketing quotas, allotments, supports, etc.) is that it is constructed so as to *end* the problem, not simply ameliorate symptoms. It is a program with many interlocking, "phased" steps, but the most important point it makes is that to ease farming into the new era means that a gradual transition must be begun to retire whole farms on a volun-



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tary basis, the problem farms at first, paying the farmers via rentals or outright purchase for putting the land into cover crops. (To correct the resources imbalance, of course, larger farms too must eventually be retired.) A paramount phase of the program is adequate preparation of the farmer and laborer by means of training and by the provision of community employment opportunities to make sure that the lot of the farmer and the agricultural worker actually improves rather than deteriorates.

This will take, initially, funds nearly as large as we are presently spending on the farm problem, but they will taper off as the farm production crisis is brought nearer to control. Our people are going to have to learn that such dislocations as these—and especially those that will be posed in many communities by automation in the years ahead—have to be faced on broad, community-wide bases. This is the great lesson of the farm problem. The C.E.D.'s recommendations have powerfully influenced the Administration's proposed 1958-59 plans and account for whatever distinction they have.

FOR THOSE like myself who feel that the historic quality of American life is understandable only in terms of the catalytic effect of the frontier and the vision of family life we have realized for generations on our farms—for all of us, indeed—it is disturbing to see farm life moving so rapidly and so irrevocably into a new era. We must, nevertheless, have the resiliency and wit to cope with this in a way that least damages our national well-being.

In any case, we may take cheer. While it is true that the large corporation farm has become important in certain specialized farming operations, the family farm, thanks to the marvels of technology which allows one family to manage more acres, is at least holding its own in proportion to all those engaged in agriculture. Family labor accounted for 76.5 per cent of farm employment a year ago, compared with 75.6 per cent just before the last war. Many experts believe this proportion can hold, as we move from the present situation of twelve per cent of our people in farming to what will probably be five or ten per cent by about 1975-80. That is something. Remember, too, that as the changes we have been discussing make it increasingly impossible for the small farmer with slim resources to lead the good life, the community must see to it that it comes to his rescue in a realistic way and does not turn its back with euphemisms about a kind of family farm that can no longer make its way.

We should realize also that it is silly and worse for us to deplore the fact that the farmer is getting a smaller share of the food dollar when it is we ourselves who are demanding more and more "semi-prepared" foods. This is the explanation for the rise of the "middleman," not some arcane conspiracy to do in the American farmer. Like it or not, a new era has come in American farming. It calls for a new era in policy and in public understanding.

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**"ANCIENT INSTITUTION"**

# Part Slave, Part Free

by C. K. YEARLEY, JR.

DESPITE THE barbarities men have inflicted upon one another in this century, the task of redefining and expanding the concept of human rights, both at local and national levels, has progressed steadily in many parts of the world. And, although these rights are much more difficult to define satisfactorily at the international level, there too they have received full expression in various United Nations declarations of human, economic, political, and cultural rights.

The U.N., acting through its specialized councils and committees, has in fact become a pioneering force in making individual rights, hitherto a domestic issue between the individual and his state, a matter of international concern and the subject of international agreement. Thus, while it must sometimes be prodded forward by private organizations and interested governments, the U.N., by investigation, persuasion, and enlightenment, maintains its case against the violation of trade union, women's and children's rights, against forced labor, genocide, and racial discrimination. It is in the context of this broader struggle to marshal world opinion behind such relatively modern rights that it also sustains the pressure against an ancient

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institution that many people in the industrial societies of the West believe to be extinct—that of slavery.

Humanitarian movements directed toward the abolition of slavery and the repression of the slave trade date back about a hundred and fifty years. In line with the liberal climate of the nineteenth century many countries, including our own, abolished slavery, while others entered into international agreements to exterminate slave trading. Less than a generation ago both the League of Nations and the Slavery Convention of 1926—to which the U.S. and forty-four other countries were a party—took steps to hasten the erosion of the institution. The overall success of these attenuated anti-slavery campaigns was unquestionably very great. Most nations created since World War I, for instance, have written guarantees of individual freedom from slavery into their basic laws. And even in Africa, once one of the principal reservoirs of the world's slavepower, not a single government or territory today gives legal sanction to slavery or the slave trade.

But slavery—defined as the status of a person over whom any or all of the powers attaching to the rights of ownership are exercised—persists nevertheless. To be sure, it is frequently hard to recognize, first because the nature of the institution, the names under which it flies and the environments in which it exists are all undergoing changes; and second because in some areas it has become a clandestine affair and has assumed peculiar guises. According to U.N. experts, however, slavery does survive "even in its crudest form" and should therefore continue to be "a concern to the international community." Furthermore, while the institution is generally on the decline, there is ample reason to believe that, thanks to the great social upheavals attendant on World War II, in some regions it is actually spreading.

EVIDENCE to this effect started coming before the United Nations about ten years ago from British and French officials in Africa and the Near East, from scholars and travelers, and from escaped slaves. Determined to look into the situation, the U.N. established an Ad Hoc Committee on Slavery which, beginning in 1950, launched inquiries of its own. Questionnaires were circulated to seventy-four states and sixty-four replies, not all of which were either satisfactory or unambiguous, were received. Additional expert assistance came to the Committee from church, missionary and labor groups, and from many interested private organizations.

The information garnered by the Committee indicated that chattel slavery in its classic form was very strong in the Arabian Peninsula (where, of course, it is sanctioned by custom and by Islamic law). This has more recently been substantiated by the articles of Ray Alan, in the *Reporter* and Noel Barber in the *Saturday Evening Post*. In the Trucial states and Britain's Aden protectorates along the southern and eastern fringes of Arabia, slavery is still commonplace, though its growth is discouraged. But in Saudi Arabia, stimulated by the dispersal of oil revenues among princes and sheiks, classic chattel slavery appears to be flourishing.

The Saudi Arabian problem is especially vexing, primarily because the demand for slaves there cannot be satisfied by slave breeding and the human chattels must therefore be procured overseas. There are at least two important human pools upon which the Saudi slave merchants draw. One is to the east of the Arabian peninsula, across the Gulf of Oman in the Pakistani territory of Baluchistan. The other lies thousands of miles westward in the vast area stretching from Bamako and Timbuktu in French West Africa to Abeche in the French Chad. The victims from Baluchistan are run across the Gulf of Oman in dhows and cleared through the Buraimi Oasis, a spot that for generations has served as a rendezvous for Bedouin raiders and slave traders and was recently the center of a dispute between the British-protected sheiks and the Saudis. The Negroes from French Africa are brought by truck thousands of miles across the continent to the Red Sea and are then shipped to Jidda, the port of Mecca, or nearby spots. Here they may be picked up and sold in the local markets or sent on to the market in Riyadh, the capital.

Since slavery is illegal in the regions around Arabia, prospective slaves are in reality free men and must be secured by treachery or cunning. It was long suspected, for example, that wealthy African Moslems sometimes took their servants with them on the pilgrimage to Mecca so that they could sell them as slaves. This suspicion was amply borne out when a French West African servant, Awad el Joud, recently escaped from his Saudi master and told his story to British and French authorities.

Similarly, slave agents of Senegalese stock who are in Saudi may pass into French West Africa posing as Moslem missionaries. There they round up prospective pilgrims, who like all good Moslems eagerly anticipate the day when they can obey the "fifth pillar of Islam" by visiting the holy city of Mecca. After conveying these unsuspecting pilgrims across Africa, the "missionaries" ship them from Suakin or Port Sudan to places like Lith, a small harbor near Jidda. Upon landing the pilgrims are seized by the authorities on the pretext that they lack visas; they are then jailed and sold off to slave traders. No one knows how many kidnapings of this kind have taken place. The French claim, however, that their checkpoint at Abeche, through which pilgrims must pass before entering the Sudan, showed an eastward movement of over twenty-one thousand pilgrims in 1954. Up to last year only about nine thousand had returned and the presumption



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is that many of these missing pilgrims have ended up as Saudi slaves.

There is little that the French can do to interdict the traffic, for within their jurisdiction it is not composed of slaves, only pilgrims whose journey to Mecca they dare not interrupt. And if the French seem impotent, the slave traders have scant reason to retire from business, for the prices of their commodities are high. Noel Barber and others report that young men capable of rough work sell for $500, while virgin females destined for harems, depending upon their color, sell for between $1200 and $3000. Meanwhile, it is impossible to tell accurately just how many slaves there are in Saudi Arabia. The best informed guesses would suggest that one out of every four, perhaps one of every three, Saudis is a slave, or in other words that there may be as many as half a million of them.

SLAVERY as practiced in Saudi Arabia may prove difficult to control; yet as it is practiced there it is not particularly hard to recognize. Its detection elsewhere is a formidable problem, however, for the institution has numerous forms which are found "in practically all the regions of the world." As a consequence, while the U.N. Committee on slavery accepted the definition formulated by the old League of Nations, its members felt that other types of servitude presently flourishing were so analogous to slavery that they fell within the ambit of that definition and hence within the scope of international concern. For example, the Committee endorsed the opinion that "it is possible that there is more human misery as a result of debt slavery than there is anywhere as the result of domestic slavery." Pledging one's own services or those of a third party to a creditor does not in itself constitute slavery, of course. But when, as is frequently the case, the services rendered by bondsmen do not count toward paying the debt, or the character and length of the services are not specified, or the bondsmen or pawns are not allowed personal rights ordinarily enjoyed within their societies, then their status is that of slaves.

Certain obligations associated with the custom widely known as "bride-price" are also analogous to slavery. In its less complicated forms, "bride-price" simply means that before a man can obtain a wife he must either pay or render service to her family. In this form the custom presents no problems. But in parts of Nigeria, the Congo, and other sections of East, Central, and South Africa, the woman is reduced to servile status. She is regarded as a chattel, as property disposable at the whim of her father; subsequently she becomes an important portion of her husband's heritable property, to be passed on to his heirs when he dies. Her children are likewise inherited by the heir and can be disposed of as he wishes.

Still another variation of the "peculiar institution" is the prevalent Far Eastern practice known as *mui tsei*. Detection again is difficult, for there are cases of *mui tsei* in which servitude is not involved. Basically the practice is distinguished by parents selling a child's working capacity or transferring the child himself to a third person, usually to be trained as a domestic servant. The process may at times be undertaken purely for the welfare of the child, but there are widespread abuses. The child may be transferred to a third party under fraudulent adoption schemes or sometimes even sold outright.

There are still other forms of servitude which in reality differ very little from outright slavery. From the farms of Iran to the Indian villages in the mountains of Peru, for instance, serfdom lingers on. Men are bound to the soil by law, custom or agreement; they are utterly incapable of changing their status and unable to dispose freely of the fruits of their labor. In Portuguese Africa, for instance, large numbers of men are converted into chattels under the abuses of a "directed labor" system. District officers in Mozambique, charged with seeing that every able-bodied man works at least six months of the year, round up gangs of men in the villages and turn them over to planters. After paying off the authorities, the planters work their chattels under conditions and wages of their own choosing. In still other parts of the world individuals and groups are required by law to perform service for other individuals or groups without pay and without the right to terminate labor on their own volition.

THERE IS NO doubt that for a long time to come slavery will be hard to root out. Obviously it is almost impossible for the U.N. and countries in which "slavery" is practiced to agree upon definitions. Direct evidence of slavery or related institutions must be diligently sought out; even in Saudi Arabia, for instance, only a few Europeans have ever witnessed slave trading or slave sales. And once acquired, direct evidence is not easily kept up to date. Then, too, when private, non-governmental organizations take it upon themselves to pass information directly to the U.N., which after all cannot interfere in a nation's internal affairs, it can create ticklish problems. Just such a thing occurred in 1950 when the representative from Peru roundly denounced the U.N. slavery committee for receiving information on practices in his country from private organizations.

It is obvious also that slavery is usually enshrined in local custom and has been an accepted part of the pattern of social stratification from time immemorial. Such an institution, like the governments that must live with it, is less in need of denunciation than of analysis, understanding, and assistance. Far from being a conscious act of inhumanity, slavery may be the



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product of ignorance or illiteracy, or religious beliefs, poverty, or unusual economic conditions. Therefore, while the U.N. is anxious to secure the banishment of legal sanctions for the institution, it is frank to recognize that compulsory emancipation, as a first step, might prove disruptive and unwise unless the circumstances on which slavery feeds are mitigated and other institutions are allowed time to adjust to the change.

Such an approach is not necessarily a callous one, for generalizations about the lives of slaves are hazardous. The French West African escapee, Awad el Joud, for instance, reported that, since he was docile, he was well treated by his Saudi master. On the other hand, he witnessed the decapitation of one runaway by his lord, and there is other evidence from the British and French that the beheading of runaway slaves is common. Again, a distinguished Near Eastern scholar tells of the old Saudi slave who was so desperately anxious to be free that his master allowed him to purchase his freedom, whereupon the free man promptly returned to his former master's service. The harsh truth is that freedom, by Western standards, in lands where degradation and poverty are the rule, may simply mean the freedom to starve. There is reason to agree with certain Arab claims that slavery allows some men the chance for a more comfortable existence than would otherwise be possible. Harem women are frequently treated just as other wives. Some slaves play respected and important roles in the household, and in the Aden Protectorates they may even hold governmental offices.

In view of these diverse situations the U.N. has confined itself to securing the acceptance of its definitions of slavery and analogous institutions, to broadening government-sponsored campaigns of education, and to the development of intergovernmental and international programs of assistance to encourage movements designed to raise the status of men still living in servitude.

As to the slave trade, there is widespread agreement that it is pernicious and should be stamped out. The problem is how to pin down the governments concerned to the implementation of this proposal. At this point, as might be expected, the complexities of international politics hamper effective action.

That the U.N., now perhaps the world's principal champion of human rights, has been unable to undertake any dramatic campaigns against slavery should not be construed as failure. It has inherited problems as old as man and they will not quickly or easily be solved. In the meantime, the benefits of its work will continue to spread quietly, as the social climates in which slavery breeds can be encouraged to undergo change.

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**"WONDERFUL TOWN"**

# New York, N. Y.

by WILLIAM JAMES SMITH

NEW YORK CITY must rank a close second to the Civil War in the volume of literature it has inspired. There is already a Civil War Book Club. What about a "New York, New York It's a Wonderful Town Book Club?" I'd join, for one. London, Paris, Rome undoubtedly have a leg up on Manhattan because of their greater age but Babylon-on-the-Hudson is coming along briskly.

It has always puzzled me, and given rise to a chauvinistic sense of outrage, that Paris should be so much more "paintable" a town than New York. For some time I assumed this to be mere historical accident—Paris the world art center, etc. But Paris probably is a really more paintable city than New York. Paris is for oils and London for the engraver's tools and New York for the camera's eye. Perhaps this is because New York is so whirling and kaleidoscopically changing a town that it has no patience to pose for even an impressionist canvas.

I must have begun to learn this as a child in the Midwest, where New York was to me a painting in our local art institute. If I remember correctly it was by Childe Hassam and was entitled "The Flatiron Building in the Rain." I recall it as a huge canvas, but that too may be a trick of memory. It was bright and blurred and sparkling and must have been painted around the turn of the century (the Flatiron Building went up about 1901 and was for a time the world's tallest building), since there were hansom cabs and voluminously dressed ladies. The picture had all the

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misty romantic coziness of a Pissarro view of the Grand Boulevards.

As an adult I must have been living in New York for years and have passed the Flatiron Building literally hundred of times in one hurry or another before I finally consciously noticed it. One day I was crossing Madison Square and I paused long enough to look up and there—with a shock of recognition—there was the Flatiron Building, palpably and patiently waiting to destroy the last of my impressionist dream. It was simply, solidly and three-dimensionally there. It was one of those moments when one thinks gray-flannel-suit thoughts and perhaps even notices that the flannel is yellowing a bit. Perhaps on sunny Sunday afternoons in summer the Flatiron Building drowsed a little above the green and golden leaves of the deserted Square and dreamt of hansom cabs and ladies running through the rain. But now, for the most part, it is as affectionately prosaic as an old family snapshot.

If the poor old Flatiron Buiding dreams of anything these days it is of the coming of those huge cranes that lumber through the streets like praying mantises to knock it down and gobble it up.

NEW YORK'S charms are transient. The very streets themselves are transient. I was recently walking down Fifth Avenue with a friend who stopped at one corner, looked all around, and joked, "I may not be back here for six months. I want to remember it as it was." Quite literally, the next day at that corner the first of those big X's appeared in the windows of a building marked for demolition.

It is a little difficult to believe that not much more than a hundred years ago Times Square was rolling farmland. Now it is one of the older, shabbier parts of the city, a gaudy backwash, a forgotten remnant of carnival props. A year or so ago a fire in Times Square necessitated the removal of one of the Arabian Nights billboards that make up the Square's loony façade. Behind the signs, now naked to the light of day, were the crumbling fronts and blackened windows of two ancient brownstone houses, elegant residences only a few decades ago and now merely a support to hold up a fifty-foot-long advertisement for ball-point pens. The monstrous near-nude lady and gent who used, oddly enough, to advertise a clothing store, have fallen before the wreckers and have been replaced by two supergargantuan pop bottles separated, just as oddly, by a Niagara of a waterfall. The plush of the movie palaces is sleazy and ELVIS has been scratched in the gilt rococo. Across the screen the eternal gorilla pursues the eternal maiden. A touch of permanence in the change!

It is the changingness of the city that accounts in part for the plethora of descriptive literature. Guidebooks are outdated as fast as they are published. It is astonishing that a city so young as New York can seem in ways so old. A church built in 1870 is an historic landmark. And some neighborhoods in less than a century have gone through two or three cycles of prosperity-to-squalor and back again. Aside from the understandably bewildered guidebooks the city regularly invokes a quota of more serious and more permanently interesting works. Some of these, of varying recentness, are Bayrd Still's *Mirror for Gotham* (New York University Press), Esther Morgan McCullough's anthology *As I Pass, O Manhattan* (Coley Taylor), John A. Kouwenhoven's *Columbia Historical Portrait of New York* (Doubleday), Andreas Feininger's collection of photographs, *The Face of New York* (Crown), and Grace M. Mayer's *Once Upon a City* (Macmillan). The last of these is so recent, as a matter of fact, that it will not be on the market until September.

Typically, most of these books rely heavily, and quite impressively, on photographs to give the flavor of New York. Mr. Still's book is an anthology of impressions of New York culled from the writings of some six hundred famous and less-than-famous visitors to New York, ranging from the days when "Manhates" was a trading post until the day when, in the eyes of a recent English visitor, it had truly become the "centre of the world." There is something, to be sure, in the city which brings out the latent scribbler in everyone, even if it doesn't go much beyond "Having wonderful time!" Françoise Sagan incidentally has succumbed so recently that none of the anthologists has had a chance to glean her. Her reflections (in French) are locally available in a book of photographs entitled, with French directness, *New York*.

A DIFFERENT sort of anthology is Miss McCullough's handsomely printed *As I Pass, O Manhattan*. It includes fiction and poetry as well as more factual chronicles, and all in massive quantity (1,200 pages). It makes the perfect guest-room book, incidentally, for the New Yorker with the typical out-of-town stream of visitors. Some of the selections are only adventitiously New York in locale or accoutrements—which might be just as well for the guest fed

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up with New York's hurly-burly. Mr. Still is extensively illustrated, Miss McCullough is not, except for a stunning color photograph of New York at night which appears as a frontispiece and on the jacket. Mr. Still is freighted with academic addenda—notes, bibliographies, indexes; Miss McCullough is light-headedly free of all but the minimum. Mr. Still should have given Miss McCullough one index.

Miss McCullough's anthology gives rise to some interesting reflections on New York as a literary theme. Everyone since Henry Hudson, or even as far back as Verazzano, has had something to say about New York —as Miss McCullough's big book testifies. And many of those things have been interesting and charming and significant in their various ways. But the fact remains that only Wolfe and Whitman (perhaps Dos Passos), among our major writers, can be said to have given over even a sizable fraction of their talents to interpreting the city. The myriad-wefted city is a myriad-voiced one, too, and few voices rise out above the others. It is rather as though the literary mind saw, too, that the snapshot was the city's natural mode of expression. It is probably the *New Yorker* vignette, which catches the city in its odd and offhand moments, that gives the truest picture.

Mr. Kouwenhoven's "graphic history" recognizes this truth, as it were. His *Columbia Portrait* was prepared in honor of the New York Tricentennial of the city and the Bicentennial of Columbia University. It is, that is to say, several years old. It is still currently available, however, and perhaps at a savings from its original $21 price, which was a bargain to begin with. It, too, is a big luxurious book and a fascinating pictorial record of the growth of the city. On page seventeen there is even a Childe Hassam "View of Union Square." But it is the photographers that come off best. Mr. Kouwenhoven has included representative work of some of the city's finest photographers from the time of Victor Prevost in the 1850's down through the documentary work of Jacob Riis and the Federal Arts Project and the "artistic" studies of Stieglitz all the way up to the present and a bemusing shot of a Queens cemetery with the lights of Manhattan in the distance. The tombstones look like little skyscrapers.

Before my backyard plane tree bursts into leaf and obscures him it is possible for me to drink my breakfast coffee at my kitchen window and watch Gabriel blow his green-patinaed trumpet across what Thomas Merton has called the "keyless aviaries of Harlem." Gabriel is perched precariously atop the cathedral of St. John the Divine, and presumably has his eye on further fields, facing, as he does, those same vast cemeteries of Queens and Brooklyn and the generations of New Yorkers no longer concerned with housing projects and subway crushes. We're all tourists here, perhaps he thinks. Maybe the only permanent thing here is the sparrows. I have a friend, a native New Yorker if he is to be believed, who murmurs to the sparrows all winter long, "Go South, crazy birds! Go South!" If they ever listen to him the center will not hold. The big cranes that lumber and groan through the streets will turn into real-life praying mantises and eat us all up.

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## CALIGULA'S DREAM

*Insomnia was his worst torment. Three hours a night of fitful sleep was all that he ever got, and even then terrifying visions would haunt him—once, for instance, he dreamed that he had a conversation with the Mediterranean Sea.* —*Suetonius*

Of gold the bread on which he banqueted
Where pimps in silk and pearls dissolved in wine
Were standard fare. The monster's marble head
Had many antic veins, being divine.

At war, he massed his men upon the beach
And bawled the coward's order, "Gather shells!"
He stooped, in need of prisoners, to teach
The German tongue to prostituted Gauls.

Bald young, long-necked and, for his era, tall,
In peace he proved incestuous and queer.
And spent his hours in the Capitol
Exchanging compliments with Jupiter.

He stalled his horse in ivory, and displayed
His wife undressed to friends, and liked to view
Eviscerations and the dance, and made
Poor whores supply imperial revenue.

Perhaps—to plead—the boy had heard how when
They took his noble father from the pyre
And found a section unconsumed, the man
Suspicioned: "Poisoned hearts resist the fire."

It was as water that his vision came,
At any rate—more murderous than he,
More wanton, uglier, of wider fame,
Unsleeping also, multi-sexed, the sea.

It said, "Poor Little Boots, you cannot sin
Enough; you speak a language, though you rave.
The actual things at home beneath my skin
Out-horrify the vilest hopes you have.

I am the king. The maddest man is doomed
To sing beneath my bellow, loud Creation."
Caligula, the pits of logic plumbed,
Awoke, and toppled toward assassination.

JOHN UPDIKE.



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# THE FEEBLE GIANT

THE TELEVISION SEASON which has just come to an end has given us little to cheer about. Don't misunderstand me. I am not an anti-television man. I know the industry has produced mountains of garbage but it has also done some fine things in its short history. I am grateful to the people who did them. However, with some notable exceptions, the industry has little reason to be proud of its work in the 1957-58 season. Instead of getting better, T.V. seems to be getting worse.

Live dramas have all but disappeared. What little journalism remains is generally uninspired. It is rare when the surviving comedians—and again I must note a few exceptions—are even mildly funny. The parlor games and westerns which were the staple of the T.V. diet all year were distinguished only by their ubiquity. And the familiar personality kids who dominate the big shows seem to grow a great deal more familiar and a lot less personable as time marches on.

This is no lone complaint. In recent months, several of the best television writers have, temporarily at least, left the industry. Sylvester Weaver, former president of N.B.C., went on the Mike Wallace show and lambasted the industry for its lack of imagination and general stand-patness. It is rare these days to find a T.V. man who is genuinely proud of the industry's recent accomplishments. The professional T.V. critics have been consistently caustic. And as Mr. Weaver suggested, the public is more often bored than not. Ratings may stay up because sets are on during the quiz game that is exactly like the last quiz game or during the western which is pitched at the eight-year-old mind; no one however is listening but the eight-year-olds. That at least is the way it often is in our house and I do not believe we are unusual.

Well, all is not lost. Like all sinners, the T.V. people are always getting another chance. There is always next year. The T.V. audiences can always hope for something better; one day they may even get it. But I do not think much will happen until the lords of television start taking a chance on young talent, new ideas and fresh formats.

For instance, it took the Soviets to discover Van Cliburn, the brilliant young pianist. He is now an international celebrity. If someone had gone to the networks a year ago and suggested that Mr. Cliburn play an hour or two-hour long concert for the nation on, say, a Tuesday evening, what would have happened? What indeed will happen if the same suggestion is made this year?

Why is it that the most distinguished playwrights of America are not writing for T.V.? If "Death of a Salesman" had originally been offered to one of the networks, would we all have seen its premiere performance? Many Americans have never seen a Broadway play. What chance is there that T.V. will employ the best actors and revive the great hits of the past for those who missed them? Can we imagine the networks being the first to produce the classics of the future?

Television journalism is still in a primitive stage. To be sure, Edward R. Murrow, with his "See It Now," and "Wide, Wide World" have done some good things in the past. But there should be room on television for a dozen Murrows and "Wide, Wide Worlds." I do not see any of them coming along. Generally, television reporting is still at the reading stage—man reads the headlines to audience.

The plain fact of course is that the television reporters have put altogether too much emphasis on the interview technique and not nearly enough on the camera. The camera should be there when things happen; and it is the reporter's business to see that it is. The kind of television journalism which is merely the daily newspaper spoken aloud is all right as far as it goes, but it does not go far enough. To make the maximum contribution T.V. has to start inventing a whole new form of journalism, a journalism peculiarly its own.

If an informed citizenry is what a healthy democracy needs, what a boon the nation has in television. The best minds in the world can talk about the most important matters to millions of people. Moreover, the best minds can talk to each other and the millions can listen in. Television is in a position to put Mark Hopkins on one end of a log and the rest of the nation on the other. It can do more than that. It can illustrate ideas by concrete example. Its possibilities as an educational force are truly endless. But as an educational force, T.V. is still in the one-room schoolhouse era.

All these potentialities exist, and more. They exist as potentialities only, though. Think of them the next time you watch a panel of brilliant people sitting around guessing someone's occupation, or the next time you watch the same plot being repeated for the umpteenth time in a western series, or the next time your ears are offended by the canned outburst of merriment that greets the infantile humor of a husband-and-wife show. Think of them, especially, the next time the guest star with a movie to plug stands around exchanging idiotic banter with the m.c. of a variety show. You will see what I mean.

JOHN COGLEY.



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# Exchange on "American Civilization"

Notre Dame, Ind.

TO THE EDITORS: I do not think that my friend Thomas Molnar will object to this effort to qualify, and perhaps correct, certain statements contained in his admirable piece "American Civilization" [May 23]. Like other perceptive European critics of America, Mr. Molnar recognizes the greatness of the American social and political achievement while urging America to reflect more frequently upon that greatness.

In general, my remarks have to do with the *political* character of American civilization and they touch on two areas: the historical matrix of the American Revolution and the "ideology" (I prefer the term "philosophy") appropriate for understanding that Revolution and its place in American civilization.

With Mr. Molnar, I wish for an explicit philosophy of American civilization, especially an explicit *political* and *moral* philosophy. As he so rightly suggests, the presence of such a philosophy is necessary for fruitful communication between European civilization and our own. Nonetheless, it would be disastrous if that philosophy did not recognize both what is timeless in political theory and what is authentic in the American experience of the past four centuries.

As another European—Jacques Maritain, in his *Reflections on America*—has recently suggested, there is a deep-seated distrust of ideologies in the American tradition, a distrust resulting from our "experiential approach" to reality. For Maritain, the American mind is noteworthy for its "modesty before reality" in the practical order. These remarks of M. Maritain can, I think, be extended to America's political traditions.

When Edmund Burke in one of his famous conciliation speeches spoke of America's love of liberty, he defined it as "liberty according to English ideas [not] abstract liberty [but] liberty inhering in some sensible object." One of the chief reasons for the permeation of democratic ideals to the least of America's citizens is that rights were closely attached to property in American thought. There is a sense in which every American citizen was Lockean in his concern for what was *his*. The Americans were brought to fighting pitch not over social distinction, but over taxation and revenues.

From this point of view, Jean Jacques Rousseau (a major prophet of the French Revolution) might be called "unAmerican" for his insistence on absolute ideas of freedom and equality, ideas which had a quite sacral tone for Rousseau. But Rousseauistic speculations on society are far from the American temper in politics. Unlike the French, Americans never constructed a separate bill of rights, thinking that ten amendments to a Constitution were sufficient. By this decision, and by others, Americans showed clearly their confidence in legal, as opposed to philosophical, principle. It might also be recalled that Thomas Jefferson recommended only English sources for American students of political and legal theory.

The recognition of what is genuine in the American political tradition is a first step in the formation of that philosophy of American civilization which Mr. Molnar calls for and, for this reason, I wish to emphasize it. My remarks, however, should not be taken as suggesting that the American political tradition was always *right* or that it is a *complete* body of political principles (that is another question). I only wish to emphasize what is indigenous to American political life as opposed to the continental, especially the French, traditions. Mr. Molnar is sometimes in danger of neglecting this aspect of American civilization.

A second reason for bringing up the "experiential" character (to use M. Maritain's word again) of American political thought is to suggest that Mr. Molnar's own views would be greatly strengthened by reflecting on this character. If the study of politics requires experience (on this ground, Aristotle judged that the young cannot adequately study political questions), it is also true that civilizations require experience. At this point, one wonders if the American civilization is, as Mr. Molnar suggests, so culturally isolated from other great civilizations that it lacks the full stature of a civilization (or, as Mr. Molnar puts it, "the acquisition of its naturalization papers"). But many of our founding fathers were young men: Hamilton was thirty, Madison thirty-six and Jay forty-two when they wrote the Federalist Papers. Where then was the age, the experience necessary for constructing documents as great as the Constitution or the Federalist Papers?

I should like to suggest (and here I am denying what Mr. Molnar asserts: that America never compared herself to other great political powers or other civilizations) that the American experience was gained from the English political and legal tradition which was a social and cultural fact in America for a hundred and fifty years before the American Revolution. Thus America *did* compare itself, not so much with Continental powers (though it heard enough about them to be wary), but with the English government(s), particularly of the seventeenth century. Also, no reader of the Federalist Papers can deny that American government was constantly compared with the democracy of Athens and the Achaen League. In order to realize the full intellectual and political stature of our American state papers, it is necessary to compare them (as our founding fathers did in a clear example of a historical *prise de conscience*) with English institutions and English political philosophy—especially Hooker and Locke—



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and with Roman and Greek political theory and practice.

These considerations do not, I think, diminish the force of Mr. Molnar's argument for an explicit "ideology" of American civilization, but give that argument even greater urgency. Much could also be said of the social and religious character of American civilization which mark it—despite its deep evangelical spirit and love of religious liberty—as a secular movement in modern history. Perhaps discussion of other aspects of American civilization would be useful for revealing other points of agreement or disagreement. On one point however, I am sure that Mr. Molnar and I are agreed; despite the powerful influence of Platonic thought in Western Europe, there is something unhistorical about speaking of Plato as a "European." I am sure he will be as ready as I to correct this small error.

FRANK L. KEEGAN.

## REPLY

New York, N. Y.

TO THE EDITORS: Mr. Keegan analyzes the reasons behind my statement that "we baffle foreigners who listen in vain to the voice of their American interlocutors." He says, in substance, that there *is* a corpus of American philosophy (or ideology), and if it does not seem explicitly formulated, this is because American practical sense and "modesty before reality" prevent too clear a definition. Nevertheless, we could find, he insists, the political expression of our civilization in the English institutions and Lockean political philosophy.

Those who have read the article to which Mr. Keegan refers may remember that I consider Mr. Lerner's implied definition of American civilization much too broad. But Mr. Keegan's attempted definition is, I think, much too narrow. Throughout the history of the United States, the Constitution, the Declaration of Independence, the Federalist Papers and other writings of the Founding Fathers, while expressing great *political wisdom,* were felt to be insufficient as a definition of American *civilization* and as an image we present to ourselves and to other peoples. However venerable, many of these documents were stamped with the eighteenth-century view of man and society, that is with a certain universalism and messianic concept. Consider these words of John Adams: "Our pure, virtuous, public-spirited, federative republic will . . . govern the globe and introduce the perfection of man." Jefferson himself refers to the United States as a "universal nation, pursuing universally valid ideas."

These and similar ideas, inspired by eighteenth-century philosophy and by the country's Protestant background, provided a rather limited framework, because they expressed, once and for all, a certain view of man and society, and excluded others. Consequently, as Professor Hofstadter puts it, "it has been our fate as a nation not to have ideologies, but to be one."

Indeed, from the beginning of our history the problem was—and is—how to fit new and contradictory national experiences (the Mexican war, "manifest destiny," the Civil War, the Industrial Age, the Spanish-American war, imperial interests in the Far East, World Wars I and II) into the framework of a previously formed image of American man, virtuous and natural, and of the American nation, happy, isolated, outside and above history. Particularly in the course of the nineteenth century, from Bancroft and Whitman to Theodore Roosevelt and Wilson, there has been a continuing quest for further elucidation and self-identification, accompanied by subsequent repudiations of the various images of what constitutes America and Americanism. As Gertrude Stein said: "America has a certain difficulty in proving itself American, a difficulty no other nation has ever had."

Why is this so? The reason, I submit, is this: while we are bound by a certain view of man, society, and ourselves, that is by a certain ideology, the European nations may fall back upon a multitude of ideologies, traditions, historical images of themselves, past forms of government and social structures. In other words, their historical framework allows a latitude that we, in search of identity and also out of need for cohesion, cannot afford. A Frenchman may claim as his the tradition of the "strong man," Pétain, Boulanger, Napoleon; another may give his loyalty to the Bourbon monarchy; yet another to the Revolution, the Commune, and to the medieval Jacqueries: all three remain within the framework of the nation, and their respective formulas for France would find room in a more complex definition.

Our national experiences, while varied, never led to an absolute and violent break, never required a new form of government; dictatorships, dynasties, revolutions did not follow each other on our soil. Hence when we try to formulate an American philosophy of civilization between Mr. Lerner's broad descriptive method and Mr. Keegan's emphasis on the political tradition, we are handicapped by a national ideology into which our vicissitudes at home and abroad do not easily fit. This ideology is a powerful factor in Americanizing the immigrants; it is less helpful when, in concrete situations, we must choose between incompatible realities.

THOMAS MOLNAR.

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# THE SCREEN

## THE 5:36 TO VALHALLA

IT IS HARD to say whether "The Vikings" will appeal more to adults or to youngsters. Since it's mainly about ninth-century Northmen who pillaged and plundered with ruthless glee, it has a great deal of violence and cruelty. The adults who were in the large preview audience squirmed rather unhappily when Kirk Douglas had his eye gouged out by a hawk, when Tony Curtis had a hand chopped off by the English, and during many of the vivid torture scenes. The children, on the other hand, took all this in stride, probably finding it no more horrendous than fairy tales or the gory T.V. programs about which they are quite casual; they had their time to squirm, however, when the picture got involved in the complicated plot and intricate relationships between characters.

Calder Willingham, who wrote the screenplay from Edison Marshall's novel, expects the audience to pay attention every now and then in order to know who's who. The story is principally about Einar (Douglas) and Eric (Curtis) who vie with each continuously and don't know until their final duel that they are half brothers. Their mothers are dead; and their father, the Viking King Ragnar (Borgnine), is thrown to the wolves by the English in one of the film's grimmer scenes. So the victor of this effectively-staged duel is due to win the leadership as well as the pretty Welsh princess (Janet Leigh) about whom both these fierce young men are so enthusiastic.

Director Richard Fleischer keeps the film moving at a fast pace, but he does not neglect scenery or Norse and English ninth-century customs. Adults will find the backgrounds and costumes and trappings well worth while. Jack Cardiff's photography in Technirama and Technicolor is magnificent. The shots of the fiords, the villages and the Viking ships; the sea battles and the assault on the English castle; the Viking funeral in which flaming arrows send a hero to Valhalla—all this helps to counterbalance some of the concentrated horrors in Kirk Douglas' panoramic production. The handsome sweep of "The Vikings" may even convince some audiences that the script well makes it point: "Love and hate are horns on the same goat."

MOVIEGOERS who prefer humor with their violence may find "The Law and Jake Wade" to their liking. With stony aplomb, Robert Taylor plays Jake Wade, a reformed bad man who, although he's now a marshal in a small western town, rescues a former member of his gang (Richard Widmark) from hanging. That's his big mistake; and the script by William Bowers never makes it too clear why the otherwise bright and brave marshal does this foolish and unlawful thing. What the script does make clear, however, with the help of an excellent performance by Widmark, is that this rescued man is cleverer and braver—and bad to the core. Most of the picture, in fact, is a competition between Taylor and Widmark. The latter is joined by Henry Silva and other members of the old gang, all of whom kidnap Taylor and his fiancée (Patricia Owens) to force Taylor to lead them to the loot he buried after a big bank robbery.

Director John Sturges sees to it that the trek is not only exciting but beautiful to look at. (The film was made on location in Death Valley and the California Sierras, and it displays its gorgeous scenery in CinemaScope and Metrocolor.) Widmark sees to it that the trip is also diverting with comments on "this most breath-taking scenery in the world" that is comparable to the Swiss Alps, although "Them what rob too many banks don't have time to see the Swiss Alps." Perhaps the wisecracks are a little too fast and modern for the post-Civil War period; at one point the group is surrounded by Indians in a ghost town in the desert and one of the dirty dogs in Widmark's gang says, "We're sitting around like customers in a barber shop, waiting for a nice close haircut." At any rate, after suitable lesser conflicts Taylor shoots it out with Widmark who, though funnier, is not quite as good a shot.

THERE'S NOTHING amusing about the characters in "No Sun in Venice," a Franco-Italian co-production that is overrun with decadent people who almost take the glow off the beautiful color shots of this lovely city. "I like to show young people who reject the conventions and morality which still regulate our bourgeois society," said Roger Vadim, and then directed "And God Created Woman" and the Sagan ballet, "The Broken Date" to prove it. He then continued his efforts by writing and directing "No Sun in Venice."

His script, as confused as his characters' morals, is about a photographer (Christian Marquand) who falls in love with a young girl (Françoise Arnoul) who is dominated by a sinister elderly invalid (O. E. Hasse) and a young scoundrel (Robert Hossein) whose interest is mainly in the old man's money. The police are involved in these unhealthy goings-on because the sinister old man is an international counterfeiter. And when the young scoundrel murders him and puts the blame on the photographer, the chase is on—in gondolas on the canals, and over rooftops of famous Venetian buildings. It's all rather silly but there *is* the opportunity to enjoy John Lewis' music effectively played by the Modern Jazz Quartet and the views of Venice, both of which provide background for the harried action.

PHILIP T. HARTUNG.



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# Two Generations Between the Two World Wars

THE CONSCIENCE OF THE RICH. By C. P. Snow. Scribners. $3.95.

By JAMES GREENE

IN THIS seventh novel of his survey of English society over the past half century, C. P. Snow demotes his protagonist, Lewis Eliot, to the role of interested spectator, and turns the brilliant spotlight of his talent on an Anglo-Jewish banking family in the period between the two world wars. In doing so he manages to present in microcosm the conflicts of that period, the total failure of communication between two generations. For this reviewer the transition has nowhere in fiction been done better, with greater feeling for the lost and the acquired values of that conflict.

Eliot has just entered his apprenticeship in law when he meets Charles March, the guilt-ridden, introspective member of one of England's most exotic and opulent families. At this time the March's family solidarity still exists and Eliot, an impoverished young barrister, is fascinated first by the opulence and only later by the strong family cohesiveness, expressed formally in the Friday night dinners, where the dropping of distinguished names echoes the vaulted careers of the elder Marches.

But the Golden Age of the family is slowly tarnished by circumstance —by the decline in private banking, by the new beliefs of the young Marches for whom fidelity to family must conflict with devotion to causes. At the book's end, the Marches' unity has vanished and England, poised for war with Hitler's Germany, has no time to notice the passing. Yet with the past goes Leonard March, Charles' father and the book's central character, whose possessiveness has, in any case, separated him from a generation whose ideologies require an absolute freedom. March is left, in Snow's telling phrase, with "the griefs and hopes of his own timeless self."

With marvelous accumulation of nuance, Snow reveals the difficulty Leonard March has in relinquishing the power of the parent. For if March "hated the thought of death with all his robust, turbulent, healthy vigour," he also hated, as does any parent, the thought of the partial deaths represented by the loss of his parental authority. The simple transfer of power between the living is one of humanity's pervasive problems; Leonard March's rationalizations for opposing all Charles' wishes are the devices of a man desperate to retain control. But the section titles carry us to the inevitable surrender: "Inside a Family," "Father and Son," "The Marriages," "The Dangers" and, finally, "Alone."

To be sure, Charles resists his father for his own special purposes. He is a complex, if not entirely sympathetic, character who is willing to risk the family honor by trying to withdraw from its historical Jewishness. The irony of the fact that he does this at the moment in history when the Jews face their greatest trial in centuries is not lost upon Snow. Eager—no, *anxious*—to be "useful," Charles opposes his father's wish that he pursue law as a career, and chooses to enter medicine. He does this not because medicine is demonstrably more useful than law, but because it is the one calling still fatuous enough constantly to harp upon its usefulness. And Charles is very much in need of that constant reassurance—is supremely delighted when he finally publishes a short article in a medical journal. He finds impossible the leisure his father has enjoyed since his thirties, when family banks were edged out of business because of the world's demands for hundreds of millions of dollars.

When Charles marries a Communist who feeds confidential family information to the Communist press, the seeds of Leonard March's final isolation are sown. For Charles is less interested in the old family solidarity than in his wife's freedom to be "useful" in her fashion.

Through this family crisis, as indeed through the whole book, Lewis Eliot remains a spectator. He is at all times on good terms with the opposing factions and we are never told where his sympathies lie. But it is indicative that neither camp asks him to use his influence with the other: it is still "a family affair."

Nothing, of course, could be more certain than the victory of the younger generation. Yet Snow manages to capture the sincerity and worthiness of those who are vanquished. If Leonard March gives up grudgingly, it is because what he has is difficult to relinquish. To the psychologically closed Jewish society in which he lived, the thirties posed principally a cultural annihilation; he could not understand his children's concern with physical destruction.

The real excellence of Snow's book lies in its characters. A more engaging, more complete, character than Leonard March would be difficult to recall. His presence in the beginning is overpowering; it is only at the expense of his superb identity that, in the closing pages of the book, his children emerge from the shadows. That the reader can put down the book convinced that no other price could have purchased this entry into the nurturing light of responsibility is testimony enough to Snow's craft.

Placed among the six preceding novels, including *Strangers and Brothers* and *Homecoming*, *The Conscience of the Rich* records for a generation with a preciously short memory the kind of world it never knew because to assert its own existence it had, as each generation must, to tear down the sun-concealing walls its fathers so lovingly fashioned. Snow's reconstruction of those walls is an achievement of a major order.



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# Decline into Maturity

**AFTER LONG SILENCE.** By Robert Gutwillig. Little, Brown. $4.

By THOMAS F. CURLEY

TOM FREEMAN, the narrator, starts out to tell the story of Chris Hunt because he is the only one who wants to tell it and needs to tell it. But in the last chapter he advises the reader that he has failed. "When I began all this I was determined to tell a brief and direct story, but the irrelevancies of life kept crowding it to crash my little party." Just what he considers irrelevant I don't know, but while he stays with the conventionally frivolous he is fine; when he tries to be serious his difficulties, as a story-teller, multiply.

In the beginning the scene is Arden, a large Ivy League university, and the time is the academic year 1950-1951. Chris Hunt is there, of course, but he is only the most eccentric of a band of high-spirited, high-living collegians. Somebody always has a car, somebody else a bottle of whisky and the girls and boys all love one another.

It can and should be noted that Mr. Gutwillig does this very well. He does not fret a scene, and if one jape does not quite come off he goes on to the next. He never stops trying and he succeeds more often than not. Older readers—those over thirty, I mean—may find all these parties rather wearing but they have only to reflect how much easier it is read about than to recover from one, and they will have good reason to relax and be tolerant.

Upon graduation, Chris Hunt and his crew descend upon New York City and begin the slow decline into respectability and responsible citizenship. I said slow because there are several parties in Greenwich Village that are very like those of Arden. One girl goes up to Boston for an abortion and another drinks her baby to death before he is born, but slowly and surely the sons and daughters of the well-to-do become more like their parents with every hangover. Tom Freeman, who couldn't tell a Communist from a D.A.R., gets into difficulties on security clearance when he tries to join the Navy. And Chris Hunt starts to write a novel.

At this point I began to ask myself: Is the book supposed to be about Chris Hunt or the narrator? Tom Freeman begins to tell us more about himself and less about Chris. What is the book about? On a visit to his uncle, Tom Freeman remembers a story that will supply the answer.

Tom's father had once wanted to be an archaeologist. On hearing of it, Tom's grandfather said to his son, ". . . why in the name of God do you want to go chasing about after dead civilizations when you've got one alive and kicking right in front of your nose? We live in this capitalistic society and it's our job to look after it. . . . we're the people who keep this system going. There's more to all this than just changing and accumulating money. Some day I hope you'll see that."

Tom's father did not become an archaeologist. It would not have been appropriate. And the present generation of Arden graduates, for all their carousing, will also, inevitably, end up as responsible parents who go to the polls and the churches on the appointed days. As for Chris Hunt, the extremist about whom the book was supposed to be written, he escapes maturity only by getting himself killed in an automobile crash.

I think that Mr. Gutwillig did not end this book at Chris Hunt's funeral because the book is not the story of Chris. *After Long Silence* is about young Ivy Leaguers growing up. It is the story of Tom Freeman and Lila, his girl friend, who marries someone else; of Stoddard Hunt, a one-time radical who ends up as a cooperative witness for a Senate sub-committee. It is about all those basically decent young people who carouse hilariously, even dangerously, but who end up pretty much like Tom Freeman himself, content with marriage, a child or two and the upper middle-class comforts of twentieth century America.

That is not the way it should have happened. Chris Hunt should have become a great novelist or a great man or both; and Tom should have married Lila; and Syphie should have married her Negro lover and had her child. Mr. Gutwillig gives evidence of being a good critic of himself and knowing all too well that he has descanted not on the "supreme theme of Art and Song" but on the inferior one of History and Sociology.

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# Politics of the Academy

**A FRIEND IN POWER.** By Carlos H. Baker. Scribners. $3.95.

By GERALD WEALES

IF A MAN teaches at Princeton, as Carlos H. Baker does; if he is high enough in the academic echelons to know something about the intimate mechanics of university administration, as Baker, former Chairman of the Department of English, presumably is; and if Princeton chooses a new president, as it recently did, it is not surprising that the tangentially involved man should decide that the process of president-hunting might be the basis of a novel. If the observer is concerned with literature, as Baker, who has written books on Shelley and Hemingway, those two romantics, must be, he may actually write the novel. The *ifs* are in; the novel is written and published. The result —after all this build-up—is very disappointing.

*A Friend in Power* is an account of how Enfield University, a lightly disguised Princeton, found its new president. The story is told from the standpoint of Ed Tyler, Chairman of Modern Languages and one of the faculty Committee of Six elected



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to advise the trustees on presidential possibilities, who burrows busily through an ordinary academic year, made extraordinary by his committee doings, only to discover, with appropriate surprise, that he is to get the nod himself. Family man and fisherman, pipe-smoker and bourbon-drinker, procrastinating scholar and understanding administrator, Tyler—the trustees, his colleagues and the novelist agree—is the man for the job. That is all there is to it. The book is divided into nine chapters, one for each month of the academic year. The point about the gestation period is made explicitly in the early pages and implicitly, even coyly, in the announcement—almost an afterthought—that a baby is to be born to the young couple who have an apartment in the house of the chairman of the Six and whose love-making, heard through the walls, has so amused the otherwise busy committeemen.

I suppose the novel has some interest as a *roman à clef*. The Enfielders may all be fictional, of course, but an uninformed guess says that they are Baker's colleagues and neighbors, wearing false noses, invented titles and someone else's clothes (the new president is in Modern Languages, after all, not in Classics). Fictional or not, the characters are bound to be the targets for a lot of guesswork as *A Friend in Power* stirs up its tiny circle of interest in the academic world. Since I am not particularly fond of playing pick-the-original (I never did figure out whom Mary McCarthy was sticking pins in in *The Groves of Academe*) and since Princeton and its faculty are practically unknown to me, I am ruled out of the game by lack of inclination and information. I am forced to consider *A Friend in Power*—as Baker would certainly want it considered—simply as a novel.

As a novel, then *A Friend in Power* is bad on three counts. First, the structure of the novel, the choice of Tyler as the point-of-view, removes the reader from immediate contact with the search for the new president and so makes the search both distant and dull. The novel is scarcely begun before the reader knows that Tyler will be offered the presidency and that, for all his soul-searching about wanting to be simply a good professor, he will take it; Tyler, however, knows nothing until the next-to-last chapter. The reader is forced to stick with the unknowing candidate through 300-odd pages, and all of the interesting maneuvers that might be going on off-stage are lost to him. The situation would not be impossible if the exchanges at committee meetings, on walks across campus, in talks with the trustees were revelatory, if they told the reader why Tyler is bound to get the job without telling Tyler that he is the choice; there are leaden hints of what is to come, but there are no scenes and no speeches that make believable the imminent laying on of hands.

The incredibility of the choice of Tyler lies in the novel's second defect. Baker is observant about the little details of university life, but he transmutes all of his observations into pure cliché. No character in the book—not even Tyler—is more than a careful quilting together of bromidic blocks. Baker knows the way academics dress, how they talk, what they drink, where they go for vacations. He knows the way to apply for a Guggenheim and when to expect an answer (April), the necessary indifference of department chairmen to job applications and the concern for publication in the colleges. More importantly, he knows the ritual and politics of university administration. He knows, too, the details of middle-class family life (ladies' magazine division)—the pretty wife, the bright kids, the tree-house, the drink before dinner, the domestic accidents. All of this knowledge, however, fails to add up to reality. Here are characters, like those of Sloan Wilson, who look real, but who are only shadows.

The book's dullness and its collection of clichés stem from the third, the major weakness in the novel. That is Baker's attitude toward his material. Baker, as a professor and an administrator, might be expected to accept (within bounds) the standard evaluation of the role of the college president (and of the college) in American life. Baker, as a novelist, can hardly do so without making his novel sound like a fictionalized tract aimed at the alumni, a publicist's view of the college today. Tyler's confusion about his position in the college allows Baker to spot the book with "think" paragraphs which sound like the academic equivalent of the advertising agency's agonizing need to decide whether a product should be pushed with prestige or popular publicity—shall I be a good professor or a good president? The academic world, like the rest of the world, can best be approached, in fiction and out, with tears or laughter. At second best, simple reporting might work in a novel, where the moral and emotional conclusions are left to the reader. Baker is essentially a booster and his allegiance drains all color from his character and his novel. *A Friend in Power* is a perfect example in fiction of what John Kenneth Galbraith, in *The Affluent Society,* calls "the conventional wisdom."

# A Journey to Presences

**INVITATION TO THE VOYAGE. By Leslie Katz. Harcourt, Brace. $3.95.**

By NED O'GORMAN

IT IS difficult to see a thing pure. A travel book is a report of the discovery and encounter with things that are far away, beautiful and real. The great travel books—*Genesis, The Divine Comedy, The Anabasis, The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*—see things for the first time. We had heard about Eden, Heaven, Asia and the Arctic, but until Dante, Xenophon, Coleridge and the Old Testament presented them to us, we never actually saw them. The tourist seldom sees a building, or a hill, or a painting for



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the first time, but rather for the ten-thousandth time. The Sistine Chapel is like a very old and familiar aunt, the Acropolis another image of the photo hung in the hall. Art courses in college most often teach recognition, not discovery. The tours with their precision and the guide books with their vulgarity destroy the encounter with the object and reduce all beauty to a curious exhibit of oddities.

Abel Cone, the man of Mr. Katz's lovely and reverent book, goes through part of Europe with grace and gentleness, with a kind of expert simplicity that is daring. He speaks with the passionate delight that being in grand places gives to some people.

The world, Abel says, "invited me to trust to my own simplicity." Simplicity is often a mask a fancy-Dan assumes, but Cone is no fancy-Dan. In the British Museum he sees a "bas-relief showing a man and woman sitting and conversing near each other on separate chairs . . . bodies poised in a state of aggressive languor . . . ripe with attention. . . . they had reached a point in conversation when they did not know whether to embrace or part. . . ." In Pisa he thinks: "What a delicious sound the weights of Galileo must have made when, after their airy descent, he heard them thud on the ground in unison."

It is not, Abel says, "rarity that lends value to what we love." And the excellence of this book is the substantial calmness of looking with a loving eye. "Florence," he says, "is All Pang." How marvelous that is! It is beautiful to say that. He describes the doors of Ghiberti, the St. George of Donatello, Savonarola, Aeneas Piccolomini and Sienna with the agility of a tumbler talking about the things of his skill.

Abel Cone "accepts enigma"; "the actual and the visionary, the real and the ideal, merge" in his travels and his travels become more than uncomfortable exercises in culture and experiments with low life. But it is the seriousness of this book that I love. The seriousness that is love and enthusiasm. It is difficult to find the unreported Europe—or the unreported anything for that matter. In this book Leslie Katz has no bone for Abel to pick, no spiritual riddle for him to solve, no theology for him to undo.

His trip was a journey to "presences," not to objects. One can read about "objects," but one can only encounter "presences." I think that a book like this will be widely read, but it should be, for in this small book and in the rapid excursion of Abel Cone Mr. Katz manages to throw a remarkable lot of light on a remarkable number of presences.

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**Thomas F. Curley is a novelist and critic living in New York.**

**Gerald Weales, a member of the faculty at Brown University, contributes frequently to this and other journals.**

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# Non-Partisan Politics

The editors of The Commonweal are not personally interested in what people call partisan politics. We do not care whether the party in power in Washington is called Republican or Democratic or Mugwump. We get no favors from any political party, and we want none. At the same time, we do believe in certain political and social principles.

In foreign affairs, for example, we are what people call "internationalist." We favor the principles behind the United Nations; we believe in united action against Communist aggression; we want world cooperation in the battle against poverty — all of which positions, we believe, are in keeping with the best in Catholic social thought.

Furthermore, we are convinced that the chief political issue today is the struggle between the West and international Communism. To our mind, this far overshadows any domestic concern. Indeed, many domestic concerns are shaped and determined by this struggle — the fact that we are unable to spend as much as we would like in social welfare, for example, is due to the necessity for heavy defense spending.

These convictions on our part cannot be kept in a vacuum; we have to look for men in public life who will exemplify them in practice. We recognize that the application of principles to particular questions is not easy, and that many people may disagree with our attempt, but we have to try. Life and human nature being what they are, the actual realization of these principles in national affairs will always be, at best, approximate. Yet we must make the attempt or these principles will remain lifeless.

— From The Commonweal, May 30, 1958

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